

BOROUGH OF MARLBOROUGH.

Annual Report OF Medical Officer of Health FOR 1905.

GENTLEMEN.—In accordance with the instructions of the Local Government Board, I beg to present my annual report for 1905. It may be noted that where certain pieces of information appear superfluous, it should be remembered that this report is not only for the information of the District Council, but also for the County Council and Local Government Board.

STATISTICS.—Tables of statistics are appended to this report. The following are the main features:—The birth rate is 19.88, a slight improvement on last year, but still a little below the average of the last ten years. The death rate is 12.36 among residents belonging to the district. Of the births 37 were males, 45 females. Of the deaths 33 were males, 18 females. The death rate from tubercular diseases, including phthisis, was 2.18. Death rate from zymotic diseases, including influenza, was 1.45. Infantile mortality, 73.18.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.—During 1905 there were nineteen cases of scarlet fever notified in the borough. Of these fourteen were isolated in the hospital. The other five were able to be isolated fairly satisfactorily in their own homes, though isolation under these latter conditions can never be so certain as at the hospital. Considering the amount of discussion at the present time as to the possibility of another complaint existing which simulates scarlet fever, but is of slight severity, and does not give rise by infection to cases of scarlet fever, some details of the outbreak may be of interest. The first cases were notified on Feb. 19th, March 6th, 7th and 12th respectively. Four of the cases were in one family, the first one having had the complaint a fortnight, and the second a week, without having been seen by a doctor. Two of these had otorrhoea and one profuse nasal discharge as complications. The next case notified was on July 24th, and after this the cases continued to crop up for the rest of the year, and are still continuing in 1906. In many of the cases, infection by direct contact was shewn to have been possible. More than one case occurred in three houses, viz., four, two and two. Six of the houses attacked were in Kingsbury Street, and direct contact of the patients was shewn in some of these. Consequently, it is fairly obvious that these cases were all of the same nature, and that the complaint was infectious, although it did not in every case spread through a family. Now, although some of the cases were very mild, and accompanied by only a transitory rash, all peeled profusely, and some of them exhibited the following complications, which, in conjunction with the other symptoms, are recognized as being typical of scarlet fever, viz., complications, otorrhoea, 6; nasal discharge, 2; adenitis, 2; acute rheumatism, 1; abscess in a joint, 1; secondary tonsillitis, 1; acute scarlatinal nephritis, 1. Five had no complications. Some of the mild cases were not seen till several days after the commencement of the attack, and it is probable that some cases escaped detection altogether.

HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT.—The isolation hospital accommodation, together with board and nursing, has been provided free of cost to the patients in all these cases. No arrangement is made for medical attendance. The hospital was occupied from Feb. 19th to April 18th, and again from July 22nd (with

only two weeks interval), to the end of the year. The nursing, at times very heavy, was managed excellently by Mrs. Hiscox. All the hospital arrangements, including the removal of patients and disinfection of bedding, &c., were admirably carried out. The need for a better supply of hot water at the hospital is very much felt.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.—One detached and two semi-detached villas have been built during the year.

DRAINAGE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL.—More than two-thirds of the house connections have been completed. The work progresses satisfactorily, and, together with this work, a notable improvement has taken place in several parts of the town by the substitutions of w.c.'s. for old insanitary privies. Sewers are still needed for Cardigan-road, the Union Workhouse, and the Isolation Hospital. In a special report for 1903 I drew attention to the need for better disposal of the workhouse sewage. As no sewer as been provided, this is in the same state as it was at that time.

SCAVENGING.—The house refuse is removed once a week. On the specified day the various kinds of receptacles which contain the refuse are placed by the side of the pavement and the collection goes on till about 11 or 12 in the day. I have regularly pointed out the advantages that would accrue to the public health if covered sanitary dustbins were used for the purpose; also if the collection were finished earlier in the day and if (especially in the summer time) the collection were made twice a week instead of once.

WATER SUPPLY.—The quality of the water is excellent. It has the ordinary qualities of typical chalk water. Its temporary hardness is nineteen degrees and permanent four degrees. The quantity of water in the well is well maintained; but in order to keep up the supply in the reservoir, the pumping has to be carried out every day in the week.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.—The number and description of these are given on the prescribed form. No complaints or legal action have been necessary in any case.

COWSHEDS.—There are five names on the register. During 1905 regulations were made by the Council for dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops. In November, 1905, I sent in a special report to the council, with reference to the condition of the milking sheds, and I made certain recommendations as to the flooring and drainage of four out of the five premises. At my last inspection no improvements had been made. I consider that the conditions under which the cows are milked on three of the premises are very bad and that immediate steps ought to be taken to improve the flooring and drainage of these sheds in accordance with the regulations.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES.—There are five slaughterhouses. These are kept in as good condition as circumstances will allow, considering the unsuitableness of the structure of some of them. Very few complaints have been made about them this year, and their condition is much better than formerly. Nevertheless, I still hold the opinion that even for a small town, a public abattoir would present immense advantages.

I remain, gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

T. H. HAYDON, M.O.H.,
B.A., M.B., B.C., M.R.C.S.

